



Health in All Policies Task Force 2011-2015 Action Report: Support Urban and Community Greening and Access to Green Spaces

Presented to the Strategic Growth Council June 30, 2015

This Action Report has been created by the California Health in All Policies (HiAP) Task Force to share tangible outcomes accomplished through the 2011 Implementation Plan to “Support Urban and Community Greening and Access to Green Spaces.” The 2011 plan was developed to implement the following recommendation: Support urban greening and access to green spaces [1].

The HiAP Task Force is committed to aligning goals around supporting urban and community greening with the state’s strategies to address the State of Emergency that exists across California due to severe and ongoing drought conditions[2]. A number of strategies can help maintain established and newly planted urban and community trees while promoting water efficiency and conservation measures. For example, apply mulch around trees to lower soil temperatures and reduce water evaporation, water young trees twice per week and mature trees deeply once or twice per month, water early in the morning or after the sun has set, use recycled water, and plant native or drought resistant tree species [3]. Future work in this area will focus on this nexus.


Outcomes of Action Steps

Objective 1. Support the establishment of a baseline tree canopy inventory.

- The Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) worked together to encourage local governments to conduct tree canopy assessments by increasing outreach on the topic through the development of OPR’s urban forestry webpage (http://www.opr.ca.gov/s_urbanforestry.php) which supports planning for a healthy urban forest that optimizes the environmental, public health, and economic benefits of vegetation. (Action Step 1.1)
- OPR and CAL FIRE partnered to include questions in OPR’s 2011 Annual Planning Survey that assess which jurisdictions track tree canopy coverage and the percentage of coverage they have (Action Step 1.1)
- CAL FIRE’s tree canopy assessment pilot project was completed in 2013. This effort provided sample methods and cost analysis information that can assist state and local entities in sustainable community planning. Through this project San Jose’s urban forest was found to produce ecosystem services and property value benefits valued at \$239 million annually, with the average annual value per tree at \$153[4]. (Action Step 1.2)

Objective 2. Develop and disseminate information about the health, environmental, and economic co-benefits of parks, urban forestry, and urban and community greening to non-traditional partners.

- CAL FIRE, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of Public Health met several times in 2012 with each other and with stakeholders to make progress on this action step. Discussion items included identifying target audiences and exploring messaging mechanisms.
- HiAP staff, CAL FIRE, and the department of Housing and Community Development participated in the 2012 and 2015 Breathe California and Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District Vegetation Conference to explore the role of vegetation in reducing exposures to near-road pollutants and the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Greenprint Summits, which focused on bridging public health and the urban



forest. These events served as critical opportunities to gather input on research, resource, and messaging needs, as well as potential dissemination channels.

OPR partnered with CAL FIRE, California Releaf, and the California Urban Forests Council to host a Roundtable on Urban Forestry on September 10, 2012 to share and disseminate resources, as well as funding and learning opportunities.

Objective 3: Coordinate urban and community greening opportunities across other HiAP Task Force implementation activities and with other state agency workgroups.

- The Task Force integrated urban and community greening considerations into action plans for active transportation, housing, parks and urban greening, community safety, and healthy food (completed May 10, 2012).
- In August 2012, the HiAP Task force multi-agency Housing Siting and Air Quality Work Group reviewed and provided input to the Air Resources Board (ARB) on research on vegetation which was included in ARB's report on near-roadway mitigation to reduce exposure to nearby traffic pollution [5].
- Greening has been a key consideration of the interagency Heat Adaptation Work Group, which is part of the California Climate Action Team Public Health Workgroup. CAL FIRE was a participant in this group. With support from the HiAP Task Force, this group drafted the State of California Extreme Heat Adaptation Interim Guidance Document which includes, among others, the recommendation to "promote and expand urban greening and the use of green infrastructure as part of cooling strategies in public and private spaces."

Related Outcomes

In addition to carrying out the items detailed in the action plan itself, Task Force members identified and pursued a variety of other opportunities to promote greening. These bullets describe additional outcomes that were not initially expected.

- HiAP staff served as reviewers for the third round of the Strategic Growth Council Urban Greening for Sustainable Communities grant applications.
- Task Force members held a special meeting to provide input to OPR on the Governor's Environmental Goals and Policy Report. Six departments and agencies participated, and the discussion focused on the proposed vision, goals, and indicators for the report. Promoting urban greening was a key issue shared in the comments.
- CAL FIRE provided input to OPR on including greening and urban forestry in the General Plan Guidelines update.
- CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry Program Strategic Plan identifies the HiAP Task Force as a partner in promoting urban forestry and urban greening and a venue for disseminating relevant studies and statistics that demonstrate the connection between green space and quality of life[6].

Value Added

Task Force members involved in this work were asked to articulate the value that was added through implementation of this action plan. Below are key points from their responses.

- [The Task Force] "raised awareness levels of how linked urban forestry and public health are."
- [The actions in this implementation plan] "allowed for interaction with other departments that otherwise likely would not have happened."
- [This plan ignited conversations that] "led to more engagement at the local level between urban forestry organizations and public health organizations."
- "Objectives [from this action plan] were woven into priority planning and policy documents such as the Environmental Goals and Policy Report and the General Plan Guidelines."
- [At CAL FIRE,] "public health consideration has become a core focus of our program."

Next Steps



The HiAP Task Force remains committed to supporting urban and community greening and access to parks as a strategy to promote health, equity, and environmental sustainability. Task Force members will be engaging in a collaborative process to explore the feasibility of advancing action steps that reflect current priorities and opportunities related to greening and parks, including balancing these priorities with water conservation priorities related to California's drought. Future actions of the Task Force will consider findings from recent studies CAL FIRE has been engaged in assessing the role of urban trees in California and examining the link between urban tree canopy cover and health behaviors and outcomes [7, 8].

References

1. Rudolph, L., et al., *Health in All Policies Report to the Strategic Growth Council*. 2010, California Department of Public Health and University of California, San Francisco.
2. State of California, *Executive Order B-29-15*, E. Department, Editor. 2015.
3. California Urban Forests Council, et al., *Help Your Trees Survive the Drought*. 2014.
4. Greg McPherson, et al., *City of San Jose Urban Forest Assessment*. 2013.
5. California Air Resources Board, *Status of Research on Potential Mitigation Concepts to Reduce Exposure to Nearby Traffic Pollution*. 2012.
6. California Urban Forestry Advisory Committee, *CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program Strategic Plan 2013-2018*.
7. United States Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service, and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, *Biomass, Carbon Sequestration, and Avoided Emissions: Assessing the Role of Urban Trees in California*. 2015.
8. Jared M. Ulmer, et al., *Green Rx technical paper*. 2015.